

Perception of Work Culture and Ethics at Hotels : IHM Guwahati Graduate Students' Perspective

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Abstract

The total culture of a company or a hotel includes its ethical culture. It displays how a company treats morality and moral conduct. The work culture and ethics in hotels will be examined through the lens of Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) Guwahati alumni in this research study. The purpose of the study is to comprehend how these individuals view and interact with work ethics and culture in the hotel business. The hospitality sector is renowned for its diverse and demanding work environment, making the examination of work culture and ethics particularly pertinent. IHM Guwahati, an esteemed institution in the field, serves as a valuable source of insight into the experiences and perspectives of individuals who have undergone formal training and work experience in this industry. Students discovered that peer pressure, leadership philosophies, corporate ideals, and equitable pay are important determinants of moral conduct using a combination of qualitative and quantitative study. To promote ethical behaviour and professional development, they underlined the necessity of open communication, transparent policies, and frequent ethical training.

It is observed that after implementing a mixed-method approach, in order to promote a strong ethical work culture, the research supports ongoing training, incentive programs, and reporting procedures. In order to raise ethical standards in hotels, it emphasizes the significance of incorporating ethics into hospitality education and advocates for equitable treatment and leadership development.

Keywords: Work culture, Ethics in hotels, Workplace values, Hospitality

1. Introduction

1.1 Description of Work Culture

Forbes defines work culture as “The shared values, belief systems, attitudes, and the set of assumptions that people in a workplace share”. The attitudes, convictions, and customs that comprise the standard atmosphere in a workplace comprise the work culture. Healthy workplace cultures take individual well-being into account while coordinating employee actions and corporate regulations with the organization's overarching objectives. Workplace culture affects an individual's capacity to adapt to a new work environment and form business ties with coworkers. The culture of your workplace affects your attitude, work-life balance, prospects for professional advancement, and level of job satisfaction. Positive or negative work culture can be quantified.

Every day, frontline staff, leaders, partners, and vendors all have an impact on the work culture that is exhibited. Employee experiences are greatly impacted by this idea, which is frequently intangible. A low attrition rate and high retention often are signs of a good work culture. A strong recruitment model and brand name may help attract top-tier talent (perceived as the employer brand) but your work culture is wh-

at will retain them

The behaviours of everyone in the company, from management to entry-level workers, shape the work culture. The policies, benefits, and mission of the company's leadership establish the tone for the culture of the organization. By choosing candidates whose personal values mesh well with a positive workplace culture, managers can influence the culture of their companies.

1.2 What comprises a healthy work culture?

Workplace culture is a dynamic idea that changes all the time depending on a variety of factors. All healthy work cultures share many characteristics, even if some individuals may prefer a more traditional work environment while others may choose something more contemporary and enjoyable. When evaluating potential employers, look for these indicators of a thriving workplace culture includes open accountability, equity, open communication, freedom of expression etc. Benefits of positive work culture include high employee retention, focused engagement on work, fostering of innovation, increase in productivity, better job satisfaction and many

1.3 Work ethics

Work ethic is a set of values guiding professional behaviour, encompassing integrity, responsibility, quality, discipline, and teamwork. A person's work ethic is comprised of a set of values, beliefs, and principles that guide their behaviour and decision-making in the workplace. Productivity, job satisfaction, and a company's reputation are all directly impacted. Ethics form the cornerstone of a harmonious, encouraging workplace culture and are a crucial component in a company's ability to forge close bonds with its clients. In every industry, employers value a strong work ethic above all other qualities in potential hires. Excellent work ethic candidates are preferred by employers because they are dependable, disciplined, and committed. You may improve your employability and set yourself up for better career possibilities by demonstrating the values of a strong work ethic. Workers at companies with a weak work ethic may also find it difficult and uncomfortable to stay on the job for an extended period of time. Characteristics of good work ethics include disciplined, punctuality, integrity, respect, team work, productivity and many

1.4 Work culture and ethics at hotels/hospitality industry

Hospitality ethics are the critical morals and used honesty politics of the hospitality industry. Using the cited hospitality management principles, the hospitality ethics assist you in protecting your reputation, future business, clients, and staff so that you can prosper and stay clear of well-known issues in the hospitality sector.

The hospitality ethics model, which emphasizes the corresponding values and tenets of this tourism industry, is widely recognized by industry practitioners as an essential code of hospitality management. Hotels is a business place where it survives on room sales and other service sales like food and beverages, SPA, gym etc. It is important to treat guests with empathy and respect as they are the ones who provide revenue for all the services in the hotels. Work culture and ethics plays more important for the staffs in the hospitality industry as they are the ones who deal with the guests. Staffs giving respect to the guests while booking the rooms, check-in, check-out etc. will ensure them the guests are coming back to their hotel property again which will impact room sales and other sales.

In the hotels, industry ethics help you build the best possible reputation and brand identity. Positive perceptions of the hotel can be created by remaining devoted to its patrons. In addition, from the perspective of the employees, hotels must have a strong work culture and set of ethics because these factors will improve staff retention, productivity, job satisfaction, and other aspects of the workplace environment.

Ethical considerations within the hospitality industry encompass a spectrum of critical issues, spanning service sabotage, overbooking practices, extended working hours, disputes related to pay scales, instances of sexual harassment, poor communication, accountability racial tensions, clashes arising from cultural disparities, challenges linked to gender equality, and occurrences of dishonest conduct etc.

This research predominantly prioritizes the examination of work culture and ethical considerations from the standpoint of the staff rather than centring on the perspectives of the guests. It places a greater emphasis on dissecting and understanding the intricacies of how work ethics and organizational culture impact the behaviours and attitudes of employees within the hospitality sector, rather than focusing extensively on the viewpoints or experiences of the customers or visitors

2. Review of literature

2.1 (Marek Merhaut, 2015) – Author concludes that the analysis of responses largely supported the expected high degree of etiquette in hotel operations, especially in regard to staff-client (host) relationships, which is a good outcome of the investigations, that is a clear indication that it is a customary element of hotel requirements. It is hard to imagine without friendly hospitality cultural, cordial and friendly atmosphere.

2.2 (M Khani, 2014) – Author states that by promoting ethical knowledge, methods, and behaviour, healthy hotel organization environment can be established that improves tourist experience, lowers employee turnover intentions, raises employee happiness, and boosts profit. The literature on tourism and hospitality management has grown, but little attention has been devoted to the ethical issues and dilemmas facing human resources in the hospitality sector

2.3 (Christina and Joseph, 2018) – Writers assert that a prominent issue afflicting the contemporary hotel industry involves the pervasive unethical conduct exhibited by its employees. This behaviour, akin to a contagious ailment, permeates through various departments within hotel companies, profoundly impacting operations, leading to substantial financial losses, and causing other adverse effects, posing a significant and recurring challenge for numerous establishments in the industry.

2.4 (Gheorghe Camelia et al)- having done their research on ‘the impact of ethical organizational culture on the efficiency of Accor hotels’, the ethical conduct of employees at Accor is directly influenced by the organizational culture. This is produced with the company's integrity in mind. The company's mission, beliefs, and objectives shape the ethical behaviour of its employees. Depending on the kind of employee, the company's objective plays a significant role in helping them build their ethical character. A team of individuals concerned with the company's moral ideals and how they may contribute to its development is formed through a variety of ethical training programs that assist employees in developing as many ethical facts and behaviours as possible within the organization.

2.5 (Besty Stevens, 2011) – The author contends that research conducted among diverse hotel managers revealed that they experienced pressure emanating from corporate headquarters and private owners due to the economic downturn. These managers asserted that a significant number of employees exhibited underperformance, prompting moral concerns attributed to deficient work ethic, diminished motivation, and inadequate compensation. Furthermore, managers shared personal anecdotes detailing their encounters and raised ethical concerns regarding theft incidents involving both guests and staff members.

2.6 (Seok Youn Ohe, 2022) – The author concludes that seven ethical climate factors in hotel companies were identified as a result of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses: self-interest, efficiency,

friendship and team interest, social responsibility, personal morality, rules and standard operating procedures, and laws and professional codes.

3. Objectives

- To evaluate the viewpoints of graduate students of IHM Guwahati on work culture and ethical quandaries in the hotels.
- To develop strategies and recommendations based on the results to enhance and promote positive work culture and ethical standards in hotels taking into account the viewpoints and issues raised by graduate students at IHM Guwahati.
 - To examine the role of IHM Guwahati in shaping ethical conducts.

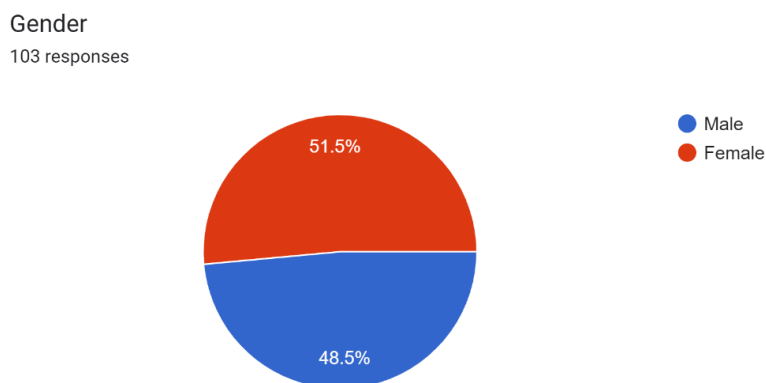
4. Research Methodology

A qualitative and quantitative approach to data analysis was adopted, targeting a large number of graduate students from IHM Guwahati, who were contacted through social media platforms. Primary data was collected by circulating a questionnaire among the graduates, through which their responses were gathered. In total, 103 responses were received and used for data analysis

5. Data Analysis

The survey was done by circulating questionnaire among random various graduates’ students of IHM Guwahati. The total number of participants was 103. Secondary data was collected through websites, published research papers etc.

Figure 1. Survey response from IHM Guwahati students



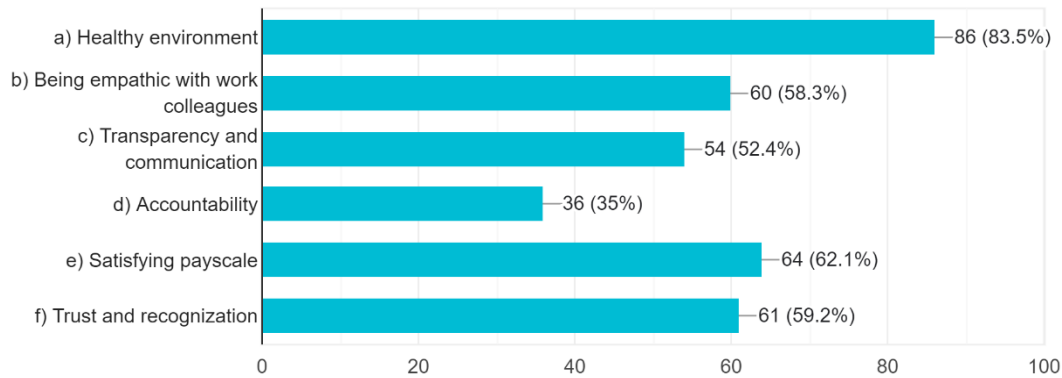
Note - Out of 103 responses, 51.5% were female and 48.5% were male respondents

Table 1. Graduation Timeline of Students from IHM Guwahati

a	Year 2021 and after	50.5%
b	Between the years 2011 and 2020	33%
c	Between the years 2001 and 2010	8.7%
d	Before or in the year 2000	7.8%

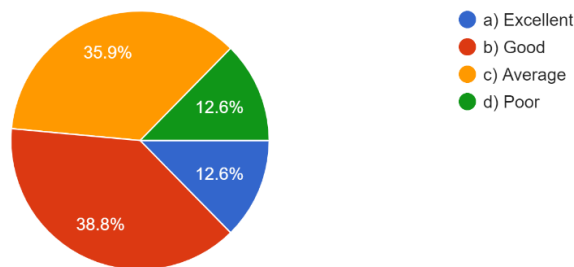
Note – This table illustrates IHM Guwahati graduation timeline

Figure 2. Expectations of Work Culture and Ethics Before Joining Hotel



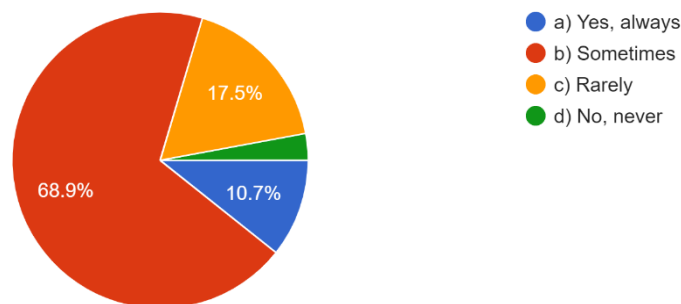
The discovery reveals that people prioritize a healthy environment above all else, with trust, recognition, and a satisfactory pay scale following closely behind.

Figure 3. Rating of Overall Work Culture in Hotels



The majority rated the hotel work environment as ‘good’ followed by ‘average’, as per the findings

Figure 4. Rating of Overall Work Culture in Hotels



68.9% of respondents claim to receive fair and courteous treatment as ‘sometimes’, followed by 17.5% who claim to receive it ‘rarely’, and 10.7% claim to receive it always. 2.9% respondents claim hotels never receive fair and courteous treatment

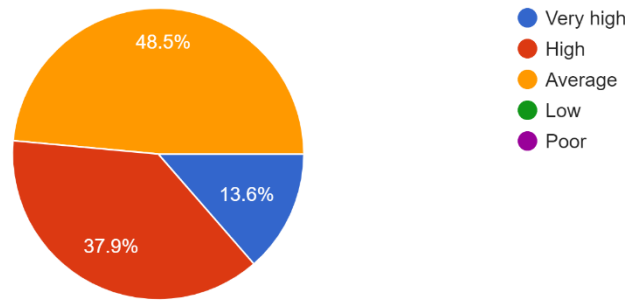
Table 2. In your opinion, how important are strong work ethics in the hotel industry?

a	Very Important	78.6%
b	Important	18.4%

c	Somewhat Important	2.9%
d	Not Important	0

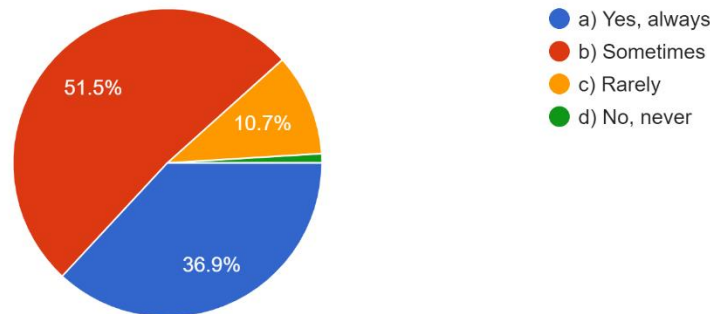
The discovery revealed that 78.6%, equating to 4/5ths of the entire respondent pool, assert the paramount significance of robust work ethics within the hotel industry as ‘very important’

Figure 5. Description of the Level of Integrity Among Hotel Staff



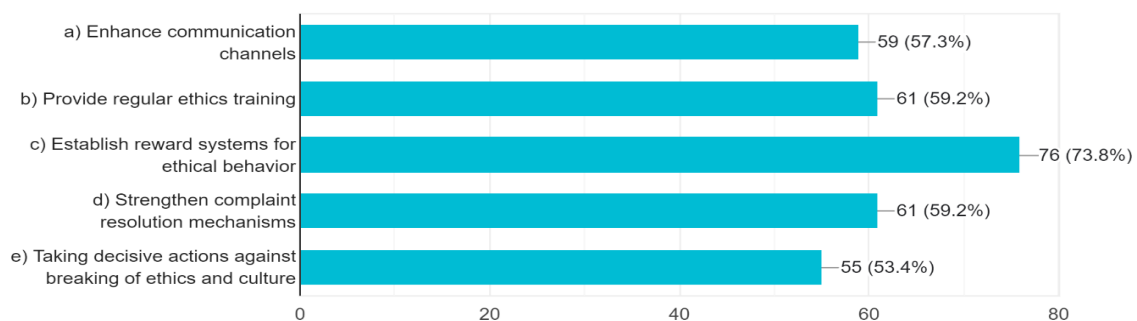
In the survey assessing the level of integrity among hotel staff, the majority (48.5%) rated it as average, while 37.9 % rated it as high. Notably, a minimal fraction of respondents (13.6%) regarded the level of integrity among hotel staff as very high.

Figure 6. Encouragement and Rewards for Ethical Behaviour Among Hotel Employees



As per the findings, 51.5% respondents claimed it as ‘sometimes’, followed by 36.9% claiming it always. 10.7% respondents claimed it as ‘rarely’ and 1% claimed it as never

Figure 7. What measures respondents believe that hotels can implement to enhance work culture and ethics



The preponderance of respondents advocated for the ‘establishing and implementation of reward systems’ targeting ethical behaviour, positing that such measures would augment work culture and ethics within hotels. The responses for the other four criteria are closely grouped together as per the research.

Table 3. Do You Believe Work Culture in Hotels Significantly Impacts Employee Performance and Guest Satisfaction?

a	Yes, always	88.3%
b	Sometimes	10.7%
c	Rarely	1%
d	No, never	0

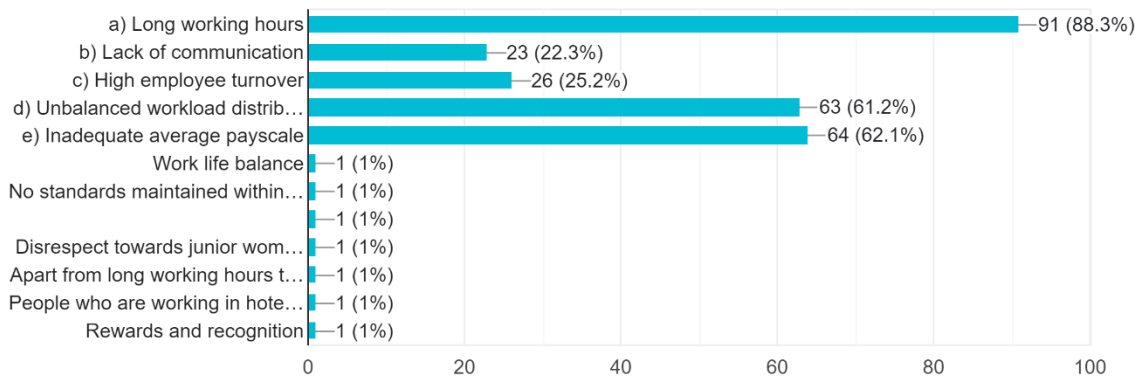
As per the research, majority of the respondents claim that that the work culture in hotels significantly ‘always’ impacts employee performance and guest satisfaction.

Table 4. How would you describe the overall organizational culture in hotels?

a	Welcoming and encouraging	38.8%
b	Competitive and contender	33%
c	Controlled and dictatorial	25.2%
d	Disorganized and chaotic	2.9%

The vote for this was a tight contest between the ‘welcoming and encouraging’ option and the ‘competitive and contender’ option.

Figure 8. What challenges do you think affect maintaining a healthy work culture in hotels?



It was observed that the greatest challenge affecting the maintenance of work culture in hotels was determined to be ‘long working hours,’ followed by concerns regarding ‘inadequate average pay scale’ and ‘unbalanced workload distribution.’ Other challenges highlighted through various opinions encompassed issues such as improper standards, disrespect towards subordinates, interns, and female staff, lack of rewards and recognition.

Table 5. How can hotels ensure ethical practices among their employees?

a	Implementing clear codes of conduct	13.6%
b	Conducting regular ethical training	7.8%
c	Encouraging reporting of ethical issues	1.9%

d	All of the above	76.7%
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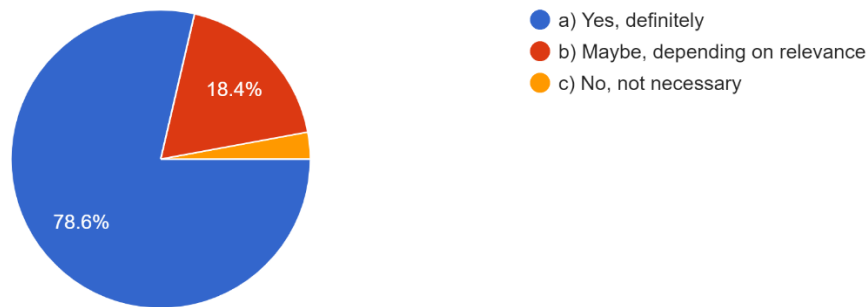
It has been found that majority claims ‘all the above’ mentioned criteria in options will ensure ethical practices among their employees. Otherwise, ‘Implementing clear codes of conduct’ is prioritized above than option b and c

Table 6. How much do you think your education at IHM Guwahati has prepared you to understand and address work culture and ethical issues in the hotel industry?

a	Very well	65%
b	Moderately well	26.2%
c	Slightly well	7.8%
d	Not well at all	1%

According to the research, 65% of respondents assert that our college, IHM Guwahati, effectively tackled work culture and ethical issues in hotels, labelling it as ‘very well.’ Meanwhile, 26.2% of participants deem it as ‘moderately well,’ 7.8% consider it ‘slightly well,’ and a mere 1% regard it as ‘not well at all.’

Figure 9. Should IHM Guwahati Integrate More Coursework or Practical Sessions Related to Work Culture and Ethics in the Hotel Industry?



According to the research, 78.6% claim that our college, IHM Guwahati, should integrate more coursework or practical sessions related to work culture and ethics in the hotel industry. Meanwhile, 18.4% view it as 'Maybe, depending on relevance,' and 3% consider it as 'No, not necessary.'

A. Besides the aforementioned questions, one question asked was, 'How does one feel about the work culture existing in hotels, particularly concerning the treatment of staff members and the organization's ethics?' The majority identifies long working hours as the biggest challenge in many hotels, with several suggesting room for improvement in India's hotel work culture. Additionally, a respondent highlighted that a positive work culture not only attracts talent but also fosters engagement among hoteliers in their work.

As per the research, emphasis should be placed on the treatment of female staff members, and equal attention should also be given to the well-being of lower-level workers. It was observed from certain respondents that certain hotels excel in terms of work culture and ethics. They consistently undergo training and evaluation in these aspects. Additionally, attention should be directed towards enhancing the reward system, revising the pay scale, and offering more facilities. Some respondents claim that work culture and ethics are well organized in some cases, while in others, they are described as dictatorial

B. A question was asked that 'Which elements (Eg. leadership, fairness, respect etc.) of the hotel work

culture have you found to have had the greatest effect on your career'. Leadership emerged as the primary focus, while respondents also highlighted various other elements, including encouragement, motivation, honesty, punctuality, versatility, courteous behaviour towards both guests and staff, accountability

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study, which centered on exploring the perspectives of IHM Guwahati graduate students regarding work culture and ethics in the hotel industry, has revealed multifaceted insights. Through qualitative and quantitative research, it became evident that the students perceive work culture as a crucial determinant in shaping ethical behaviour within hotel operations. They emphasized the pivotal role of organizational values, leadership styles, and peer influence in fostering a positive work environment conducive to ethical conduct. Moreover, students highlighted the significance of fair compensation, flexible working hours, accounting, healthy working atmosphere, regular ethical training, transparency and communication etc for professional growth as essential factors in enhancing employee morale and dedication to ethical practices. Regular training on hotels' work culture and ethics also plays key role.

The findings from this research advocate for a comprehensive approach towards cultivating a robust ethical work culture in hotels. Recommendations include the implementation of transparent policies, continuous training programs on ethical behaviour, reward systems and the establishment of channels for reporting and addressing ethical concerns. This study underscores the significance of integrating ethical considerations into the core fabric of hotel management education, preparing future professionals to navigate complex ethical challenges while emphasizing the pivotal role of organizational culture in shaping ethical conduct within the hospitality industry.

Respondents agree on the possibility for improving work culture and ethical standards in hotels, which requires a combination of managerial techniques, fair treatment, and extensive training programs. Overall, the entire study suggests a demand for comprehensive measures to improve work culture and ethical standards in hotels, with an emphasis on leadership development, fair treatment, suitable rewards, and creating a welcoming atmosphere for employees.

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